

BOWIE, MD - As Tax Day, April 15th, quickly approaches, Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) today hosted a workshop for non-profit organizations with the Taxpayer Advocate Service, an IRS program that provides an independent system to assure that tax problems are promptly and fairly handled. Rep. Hoyer invited non-profit and faith-based organizations from throughout Maryland's 5th Congressional District to assist them with learning more about the Taxpayer Advocate Service and to ensure that they have the resources they need during tax season. Congressman Hoyer made the following remarks at the workshop.

"The Taxpayer Advocate Service is a very important part of making our tax system fair for all taxpayers.

"Last week I met with Nina Olson, the National Taxpayer Advocate, about some of the most difficult problems that taxpayers have with the tax code. And she has important ideas, and was very helpful, so I have no doubt that you and the people you help can benefit from the services that the Maryland Taxpayer Advocate Service provides.

"The IRS now prints more than 1,000 publications, forms and instruction booklets. The tax code has grown from 500 pages in 1913 to over 60,000 pages today. Four common forms - form 1040 and schedules a, b and d - take an estimated 28 hours, 30 minutes to prepare, according to the IRS, up from 17 hours, 7 minutes in 1988.

"Even the simplest form - the 1040EZ - now requires 3 hours, 43 minutes to prepare, up from 1 hour, 31 minutes in 1988. The burden of some of the most complex parts of the tax code - those associated with the Earned Income Tax Credit - fall on those who have the least ability to pay for assistance.

"This in turn increases the calls of fraud and diverts IRS compliance resources from closing a tax gap that some estimate could be close to \$250 to \$300 billion annually.

"Specifically, you and I know that the Earned Income Tax Credit rules are some of the most complex rules in the entire tax code. But it is one of the most helpful and beneficial parts of the tax code for working families who are looking to make a way for themselves.

“That is precisely why it is so important that Marylanders get the help they need with their taxes and the EITC, and why this program is so important.

“I advocate on behalf of tax reform every chance I get - and the President has called his commission, but has really put the issue on the back burner.

“Our tax code is outrageously complex, and it has only become more so under the Bush Administration. The code and regulations have grown by more than 10,000 pages over the last four years.

“I argue that a tax system that is more simple, more fair and more efficient is better for economic growth and better for the average American. Tax reform and simplification should have the goal of making compliance simpler for every taxpayer as well as for the administration of taxes.

“I’m working to reform the tax system and implement many overdue, sensible changes that would provide relief from needless burden and make our tax system simpler, fairer and more efficient.”

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